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Next Update: None

SOUTHWEST AREA 2007 FINAL FIRE SEASON OUTLOOK

PRODUCT INTENT & DESCRIPTION

This intent of this outlook is to provide a scientifically based look at factors contributing to the seasonal potential for significant fire activity. Fire season potential is predicted for the period May – August in terms of the likelihood of significant fire events that will require mobilization of additional resources from outside the area in which they originate. Areas highlighted as “Above Normal” are likely to require additional external resource mobilization.

SUMMARY

The potential for significant wildland fire activity for the 2007 Southwest Area fire season is **Above Normal** across southern and far western portions of the area, and **Normal to Below Normal** elsewhere. Above Normal potential will be focused from southeast Arizona to southwest Texas from May to mid June, then shift west into southern and western Arizona from mid June to mid July. The need for additional firefighting resources from outside the area is expected to be near normal. Resource needs will be mitigated by the fact that western and eastern portions of the region are expected to have Above Normal fire potential at different times and for relatively short durations.

- Unusually warm, windy and dry conditions expected to displace moist conditions across the southeast half of the region from mid-May into June, with sustained hot and dry conditions not expected west of the continental divide until mid-June.
- Overall fuels conditions are most critical west of the continental divide, due to a combination of significant carryover fine fuels, invasive perennial grasses, weak green-up, an increased dead component in brush fuels due to drought and frostkill, and below normal fuel moisture values due to drought.
- Fuel loading and continuity are much above normal east of the divide due to a combination of significant carryover and new growth.
- Fuel conditions west of the divide will continue to be mitigated by more temperate conditions and occasional light moisture into June, while fine fuels in the previously wet areas to the east will begin to cure rapidly around mid-May.
- Monsoon to begin roughly on time (early-mid July), with a strong initial moisture surge into Arizona followed by less consistent moisture thereafter, and drier than normal conditions east of the divide.
- Forecast confidence is average to below average due to an uncertain transition from El Niño to La Niña conditions and a persisting dynamic weather pattern.

